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Trade, Women, Class, and Society in Ancient Western Asia [and Comments and Reply]

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# Trade, Women, Class, and Society in Ancient Western Asia

by Allen Zagarell

RECENT DISCUSSION OF THE EFFECTS on society of long-distance exchange (see, for example, Ericson and Earle 1982, Earle and Ericson 1977) has placed the nature of late prehistoric and early historic Mesopotamian trade and society in question. The once generally accepted view of early Mesopotamian society as "statist," despotic in Wittfogel's sense, has come under heavy fire. Deimel (1931), Schneider (1921), and Falkenstein (1974), among many others, argued that early Sumerian society was characterized by a "temple economy" in which private property was peripheral and "public" property, first that of the temple and then that of the state, dominant. Often considered an anomaly, this interpretation was in fact in conformity with 19th-century anthropological models, as Schneider (1921:24) made clear when she compared the Sumerian "temple-dominated" economy with that of village India (and see Komoróczy 1979). Criticism has come from many different directions, and its implications have varied. Diakonoff (1954, 1969), Gelb (1965a), and Gomi (cited by Maekawa 1973-74:114), though recognizing the enormous economic role of public institutions, have emphasized that private landed property existed alongside the temple/state sector during the Early Dynastic III phase (ca. 2600-2400 B.C.). Other scholars have denied that the temple ever played an independent role in Mesopotamian history, interpreting it as an appendage of a central secular power whose roots stretched back farther into history (Maekawa 1973-74). Still others have raised questions about the data utilized by Deimel to build his temple-state model (Foster 1981).

This opening of the conceptual floodgates had implications for the conception of trade during this period. When the temple and thereafter the palace were seen as dominating the economy, the merchants periodically mentioned in the early texts were considered essentially temple/state functionaries (Falkenstein 1974)—that is, more like agents of these major institutions than individualistic profit seekers. Now this concept was challenged. Leemans (1950:47) suggested that some mer-

chants worked for temple/palace institutions while others worked on their own behalf. Adams (1974) carefully raised the question of entrepreneurially oriented individuals possibly operating alongside the temple/state apparatus. Others discovered evidence of merchants seeking private gain either alongside or independent of temple/state institutions (Foster 1977, Powell 1977). Shortly thereafter came the suggestion that not only were there entrepreneurs in the early historical phases but they may already have been operating in late prehistory (Yoffee 1981:17). In fact, somewhat earlier the thesis had been put forward that at least since the 4th millennium a market network had existed in Mesopotamia and that "only through the understanding of the *psychology of man* can the drives and impulses of the economic process be uncovered . . . the impulse to truck and barter, with *merchants organizing production*" (Lamberg-Karlovsky 1975:347, emphasis mine). A still earlier statement in the same vein is that "merchants behaved in much the same way as merchants do the world over today; they had their laws, and much more important, their codes of honour, which their weaker brethren transgressed from time to time" (Mallowan 1965:6).

The major argument for the early role of independent merchants and commodities has been developed by Kohl (1978), who argues that evidence for the production of objects for exchange begins in Early Dynastic III. Utilizing material from southern Iran, he argues that a symbiosis developed between highland and lowland that was based primarily on the social need for hierarchy of the Mesopotamian lowlands and that region's ability to produce a surplus combined with the highlands' more backward social structure and wealth of natural resources. The increasing dependence of the highlands on the alluvial lowlands created a system of commodity production—the production of carved chlorite ritual vessels that are found throughout much of the Near East. Lamberg-Karlovsky essentially accepts the proposition that during Yahya IVb1, Yahya and, by extension, much of central and eastern Iran were drawn into a massive trade network (Lamberg-Karlovsky 1975:354-56; Lamberg-Karlovsky and Tosi 1973). There is broad consensus that by Early Dynastic III there were widespread exchange systems in which the production of commodities played an important role. There is little question that by that time individuals were engaging in exchange (and other activities) for personal gain.

These important new insights into early Mesopotamian society have had the effect of pushing into the conceptual background the role of the central societal institutions and highlighting market-mediated social relations. Despite their import, however, it is inappropriate to single out any one factor in attempting to delineate the motive and transformative forces of a social formation, especially given our tendency to "discover" in history the same motive forces, the same "psy-

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chology of man," that we "know" from our own times. Exchange is not simply an economic act even in modern capitalist societies; politics plays a major role in setting the rules, the conditions, and the profitability of exchanges (Poulantzas 1980:17). Early Mesopotamian exchange should be approached as part of the changing complex of social relations of production, affecting and being affected by the various modes of production, consumption, and distribution that characterized Mesopotamian society.<sup>1</sup>

The central points I want to make are that the various and particularly the dominant modes of production characterizing Mesopotamia were quite different from the modern capitalist mode; that centralized production with public/communal labor was critical for the emergence of state power and the creation of the conditions allowing commodity relations and independent merchant activity; that the state took an active role in furthering state production but, perhaps quite unintentionally, created the conditions in which independent merchants could emerge; and that collective female labor played a key role in that process.

I will begin by delineating Mesopotamian modes of production with emphasis on the production of goods that may have been destined for long-distance exchange; the point of departure here will be Early Dynastic III. Then I will examine the prior archeological record for the conditions that gave birth to a system of exchange and take a closer look at that system.

## MODES OF PRODUCTION IN EARLY DYNASTIC MESOPOTAMIA

The economic sectors of Early Dynastic Mesopotamian society were the extended-family (kinship/corporate) units, the private estates of the elite public officials, and the public institutions (palace and temple). These sectors were characterized by rather different modes of production (social relations of production) that together made up the changing face of the Mesopotamian social formation.

The sector we know least about is the family-unit sector. The extended family was a large, multistoried kin group of the conical-clan type (Gelb 1979; Diakonoff 1975, 1976; Sjøberg 1967:208) that owned extensive areas of contiguous agricultural property worked by its subunits. Each extended family had its own leaders (Gelb 1979:82–87). Texts reporting extended-family sales of fields and homes and occasionally of individuals into slavery give some indication of the degree of corporateness of these groups. From comparative ethnographic material one might assume that there was a high degree of sharing and division of labor within the group, making it relatively autonomous, essentially combining agriculture and home manufacture (see Gelb 1972b:90 for the Mesopotamian parallel to the Mycenaean *oikos*-household). Needs that could not be met internally would appear to have been relatively few. Although the units seem to have been somewhat internally differentiated (ranked), they seem to represent what has variously been called a kinship (Sacks 1979:chap. 3) or lineage (Terry 1975) mode of production. Kinship, age, and sex determined the division of labor and the distribution of goods. Much of the labor was performed by members, although supplementary use of unfree labor (slaves, often women) was not uncommon. This sector must once have included the vast majority of the free members of the community and seems to have been rooted in the distant past (Oates 1969:143). By the Early Dynastic period, however, it was in decline. Whereas land sales recorded for Early Dynastic III are invariably sales by

groups, in the following Sargonic period (2340–2100 B.C.) the groups involved are often smaller and in over half the cases the sellers are individuals. By the Ur III period, houses are overwhelmingly being sold by individuals (Gelb 1979:70).

Although large kin groups may have continued to exist (Diakonoff 1975), their role was clearly on the decline (see Fox and Zagarell 1982, where it is argued that the form was retained, although subordinated, in order to preserve the system as a whole). Kin units, essentially autarkic, were not entirely so; the land sale documents are a sign that all was not well. Moreover, these sales were being conducted in silver, and there is evidence that silver was playing an important money-like role. Individuals were required to pay part of their (tax?) obligations in silver. Certain goods were being sold within the community (see, for example, Deimel 1931:82, 94, 96, 100). Large numbers of individuals were caught up in debt, and kin seem to have been selling kin into debt slavery or donating them to the temple. Debt slavery seems to have reached such dimensions that by Early Dynastic III rulers were declaring periodic debt amnesties, releasing all debt slaves and allowing them to return to their homes (Edzard 1976). This is not, of course, to suggest that, even disregarding these debt relations, such family groups ever lived in isolation from the larger community. All citizens were required to perform certain public tasks, for example, canal cleaning (Gelb 1967), and particular members of the community may have been encumbered with other tasks for public institutions.

Kohl is correct, then, that by Early Dynastic III commodities were playing an important role, but the process seems too advanced to have been just beginning. Clearly, external commodification had already found its way into the community. But this is not to say that we are confronted by a capitalist state in the making. Commodity relations were dissolving kin community relations, but the form this process took was determined by the broader historical/social-organizational milieu.

The dissolution of the kin core of the society was a key condition for the emergence of privately owned elite estates. The elite were often both the leading representatives of the larger kin lines and public officials (of temple or palace). The economic structure of these estates paralleled, on a smaller scale, that of the public institutions, but they were privately owned. Labor might include some dependent kin, but unfree or semifree workers were utilized extensively. Great use was made of public labor resources (slave and helot-like workers). Indeed, it would appear that state/temple officials exploited their positions of authority in order to expand their power. They were apparently able to impose their will on individuals reluctant to contribute labor or to sell property. Almost all the land sales reported are to leading officials, and the so-called Urningina reforms indicate that officials were so engaged.<sup>2</sup>

An important question is the extent to which goods produced on these estates were traded during the Early Dynastic period. Certainly, many of the products of these manors were the same as those that did find markets: grains, textiles, dates, fish. Moreover, since state/temple officials were obliged to gain access to prestige goods and were actively engaged in obtaining silver from subordinates, and since someone was providing loans to impoverished members of the populace, it must be assumed that to some extent goods were being exchanged. While there is no evidence for private commodity production as a major form of social production or for large-scale trade in

<sup>1</sup> This is generally the position espoused by Kohl in a series of articles. Unfortunately, despite his important contributions he does not specify just what these modes are (see, for example, the comments on his 1978 article, especially Hayashi 1978).

<sup>2</sup> It is relatively common in early societies, where the state has only limited power to control its own officials and where the society is less than organically integrated, for members of state bureaucracies to utilize their state powers to build a base independent of the state for which they nominally labor. A powerful example is that of the 19th- and 20th-century members of the Iranian Ghavam-el-mulk family, who utilized state positions to make themselves tribal leaders of one of the major nomadic confederations, thereby taking control of important trade routes through the countryside (Barth 1961:86–89).

the products of private estates, the possibility that some of those goods did find their way into exchange networks cannot be rejected. Indeed, I assume that over time this was increasingly the case. Be that as it may, the evidence does not support the contention that this economic sector provided the basis for long-distance exchange either during the Early Dynastic or earlier.

The components of the public sector in this period, the "temple economy" and the "palace economy," represented essentially a single mode of production embedded in two different institutions. Temple and palace amounted to massive self-contained households producing and manufacturing practically all the goods they needed; the temple was simply the household of the god, the palace that of the king or queen. In this sense neither differed from the extended-family units or the elite estates. However, the forms of labor utilized by these public institutions differed sharply from that employed by the kin groups. The relations of production were not those of kinship but those of subordination. Moreover, the subordination here was public/communal, under the direct control of the state. I have elsewhere called this the "temple mode of production" (Fox and Zagarell 1982), but the term has its drawbacks; it is not simply another term for the temple economy but rather refers to the public/communal-productive aspect of the economy. It included free individuals, some of whom both occupied important positions within the temple/palace hierarchy and had ties to community kin groups (that is, the very groups that tended to amass private wealth outside the public sector). Other free individuals (*lukur dabba*) served as foremen, particularly within the temple, receiving field-cultivation rights for their services (Yamamoto 1981) and thus representing a relatively privileged form of dependent labor. Under them were workers dependent to different degrees ranging from being tied to state/temple lands but retaining family life and land-use rights to being deprived of family life and receiving rations. Such encumbered laborers have been classified as helots or slaves depending on whether or not they were deprived of family life and could be separated from the land and bought or sold (see Gelb 1972*b* and Diakonoff 1976).

The function and position of these dependent laborers varied. Generally, the various levels of labor were specialized according to task. Large numbers of laborers, called *šub-lugal* (later *eren*), were organized into groups of approximately 20 that performed manual labor and agricultural work and also played the role of lower-level military personnel. All of these appear to have been males. Alongside them were carriers, normally males but apparently sometimes females (see Harris 1975:199, 175). Males also herded the temple animals and engaged in crafts, in the latter case (at least in the later part of the Early Dynastic) often working directly for the palace. At the lower end of the scale were the *igi-nu-du* (literally "blind ones"), males who could be bought and sold and appear to have been used to water the orchards (Schneider 1921:50; Maekawa 1973–74:92).

Females might hold high positions in the temple hierarchy. Particularly at Ur, they seem to have been the major administrators, and certainly the queen's palace was administered by her at Ebla (Pettinato 1981:75). Under certain conditions they appear to have had extremely high status, at least ritually perhaps higher than men's (Moorey 1977). At the same time, women represented a very high percentage of the laborers, particularly in the temple sector, where they were isolated in cloisters and worked in larger establishments. These women were involved in the mass production of goods; their tasks included production of textiles, work in orchards, swine herding, corn grinding, mat making, carrying, and agricultural labor (Schneider 1921:35, 80–82; Deimel 1931:85–86, 109). The status of these women is unclear. Many are identified as slaves, but it has been suggested that many may in fact have been helots (members of the community with family lives who

were encumbered with labor-service requirements) (Gelb 1972*a, b*). This female labor force and dependent male workers of various kinds were sustained by daily or monthly rations. Other workers received plots to work or have worked by others to provide their sustenance.

The major forms of recruitment of these workers may be distinguished as internal to the society (sale into debt slavery or dedication to a temple [*arua*]) or external (capture, purchase, or the acceptance of refugees from other communities). The first was presumably related to impoverishment—to the commodification of relations within the community—and the second based either on raiding or on a severe emergency affecting a neighboring community. There appears to have been a tendency to send male prisoners of war to the palace and female prisoners to the temple (Gelb 1972*a*:10), indicating differences in the coercive power available to these institutions. Interestingly, in the Early Dynastic texts, the taking of male prisoners is rarely reported; the men were usually massacred and the women and children brought to their captors' city (see, for example, Gelb 1973:72; Hirsch 1970; Brandes 1979). When men were taken, they were variously hobbled so as to present no danger in a society in which weaponry offered no insurmountable advantage (see Gelb 1973:72; Diakonoff 1976:67). From this arises the suggestion that helotry (a dependent family life) has an organizational advantage over chattel slavery as the dominant form of state exploitation, reflecting the weakness of the state vis-à-vis unfree labor.<sup>3</sup> Just as important, however, although the use of prisoners of war increased over time, during the Early Dynastic female captives are suspected to have predominated (Gelb 1972*b*, 1973), presumably because they were more easily coerced than male labor and less likely to resist forcefully.

The major products of the public sector that found their way into exchange networks were grains, fish (dried and salted), wool, and textiles (Crawford 1973; Schneider 1921:65, 93). Of course, other goods must also have been exchanged; the early epic poem "Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta" mentions grains, manufactured leather goods, and textiles as involved in the negotiations between Uruk and Aratta (Vanstiphout 1983:38). None of these goods were directly produced for exchange; they were produced to be utilized internally, for redistribution, for the cult. The surplus alone was diverted into trade. This public/communal sector was not, however, divorced from the society as a whole. Rather, it was directly related to the emergence of the state. Although the influence of particular families and, by extension, officials must have reflected the productive power of family members and their dependents, centralized, public/communal production was a way of circumventing the fractious extended family. The development of stored surpluses and the working of that surplus into other products necessitated a bureaucratic system of controls, a system of scribes, seals, and writing. It also necessitated a system of encumbered labor producing the surplus and the secondary products. This system of production was beyond the control of the kin units. The more the systems of labor and control developed, the more this public/communal sector dominated the social formation (Lambert 1960, 1961). The dominance of the public/communal sector, though not typical of ethnographically known states, is the major form of early Near Eastern, Mycenaean, and perhaps New World state (see, for example, Carrasco 1982 and Chadwick 1958:chap. 7).

<sup>3</sup> This despite the fact that some scholars involved with the emergence of the Classical Greek world see helotry and the preservation of family and ethnic ties as far more dangerous to the enslaving society than a system based on the atomization of individuals under a chattel slave system (Fine 1983:170). If this is correct, then other explanations must be found for the massive use of helot-like labor in early state societies.

Another form of exploitation available to the public authorities was the extraction of wealth from other communities through the application or threat of force, that is, tribute. The exaction of tribute was certainly practiced during the Early Dynastic period, but before the emergence of a strong public sector it can only have been intermittent and unstable (see, for example, the poem "Gilgamesh and Agga" [Falkenstein 1966] and the changing fortunes of Umma and Lagash). The system of tribute, and particularly labor tribute, became enmeshed in the public/communal productive sector.

## EXCHANGE AND THE EMERGENCE OF COMMODITY PRODUCTION

Evidence for exchange exists at least as early as the Epipaleolithic (Mellaart 1975:28) in the form of trade in obsidian and similar products under Neolithic, small-community conditions. It is uncertain whether this Neolithic trade was organized communally or was an individual affair. At sites like Umm Dabaghiyah there were community centers and perhaps community production. Certainly, by the Chalcolithic, community specialization was taking place (at Halaf, for example, where it is particularly evident in pottery production [Watson 1983:240–41]). Evidence for community surplus storage occurs as early as the late Neolithic (Singh 1974:145) and continues into the Chalcolithic. Seals and the remains of sealings give evidence of the social control system better known from the Late Chalcolithic and early historic periods; the sealing of goods to be shipped or stored limited legitimate access to them. At Tepe Gawra there are strong indications of the increasing importance of storage (Makkay 1983). Communal labor for the construction of communitywide projects is evidenced well into the Neolithic (for example, at Jericho and Tell es-Sawwan). That communal labor became increasingly important during the Chalcolithic is indicated by the increasing size and complexity of community buildings. Although massive irrigation systems do not appear before the early historic phases, less complex irrigation systems were being constructed during the late Neolithic and the Chalcolithic. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the storage facilities are often found in conjunction with community temples and indications of collective labor, there is no hint of the public/communal mode of production, as I have defined it, before, perhaps, the late Ubaid, and it can definitely be said to exist only with the beginning of the Uruk period (Late Chalcolithic).

What, indeed, would constitute evidence for the existence of this production mode? Nissen (1983) has convincingly suggested that the mass-produced, relatively standardized bevelled-rim bowl is connected with the temple/palace ration system (for a different position that nevertheless accepts the connection between this bowl and the central role of the temple system, see Beale 1978). These bowls first appear during the Early Uruk period and become ubiquitous during the Late Uruk. They are succeeded by a series of functionally similar mass-produced vessels (Nissen 1970:133). Thus, if we are to accept the bevelled-rim-bowl criterion, this mode of production became important during the Early Uruk and continued into the historical period. There is no clear evidence of similar mass-produced vessels for the preceding Ubaid period, and in fact the bevelled-rim bowl is far less common in the Early Uruk than in the Late Uruk.

A second form of evidence is the motifs found on seals and seal impressions. Whereas the late Neolithic/early Chalcolithic sealings are often geometric in design, those of the later Chalcolithic phases are typically zoomorphic and anthropomorphic. The late Ubaid motifs often include representations of domestic herds, hunting, and cultic temple scenes. Although the herds probably indicate some type of labor performed for the temple, most of the sealings do not refer to human labor for

the community. Only in the Susiana plain, at the very end of what in Mesopotamia would be characterized as the Ubaid period (Late Susa A), are there rare representations of humans laboring for the temple (for example, Amiet 1980:121–23, pl. 6). These representations become increasingly common during the Uruk period. By the Late Uruk and Jamdet Nasr periods, seal motifs depict all the major components of public/communal production (herding of goats and sheep, raising of cattle, storage of grains, working of fields and orchards, fishing, potting, weaving, and spinning [Amiet 1980:256, 260, pl. 15, 16]). A very common type of seal represents women performing most of the activities mentioned.

The public sector, with its community labor and public storage of surplus and the rudimentary bureaucracy necessary for the control of that surplus, existed before the late Ubaid/Early Uruk appearance of the public/communal mode of production. It is possible that the use of encumbered or unfree labor occurred on a smaller, more limited scale before the Uruk. Significantly, however, during the Late Ubaid and Early/Late Uruk there were large-scale movements of populations (for example, movements from the Susiana plain and from Eridu to Nippur and the Uruk region [Adams 1981]). These movements seem to represent massive population displacements and are certainly, to some degree, to be explained politically, that is, as movements from less successful, more unstable chiefdoms to more successful ones. Given the fact that the development and expansion of the system of dependent public labor corresponds with this movement, one may assume that some part of those populations became integrated into the public labor system as dependent workers. I have previously suggested that the emergence of this system is reflected in the Mesopotamian creation myths and that its development can be seen as an attempt to alleviate the tensions of the earlier kin/corvée system (Fox and Zagarell 1982, Zagarell 1986). Military forays into the surrounding regions probably accompanied these population movements and, in fact, may have been partly responsible for them. Certainly, they must have been a factor in the recruitment of encumbered public labor (military scenes appear on several high-status Late Uruk cylinder seals [Brandes 1979; Delougaz and Kantor 1972:32]). Among the earliest texts are reports of slaves, male and female, many apparently coming from the highlands (Vaiman 1976). Although it cannot be proven, there is reason to believe that this labor force included a very high percentage of dependent women. Thus, it would be these groups, predominantly nonlocal and to a large extent female, that represent the earliest stage in the emergence of public/communal production, the production mode that formed the backbone of the emerging public power.

## THE PUBLIC/COMMUNAL MODE OF PRODUCTION AND THE EXCHANGE SYSTEM

The public/communal mode of production was intimately connected, both temporally and spatially, with the expansion of long-distance exchange. Contemporary with the emergence of this new mode of production was the regional expansion of the Mesopotamian/Iranian system in the form of "colonies," trading communities and outposts. During the Late Uruk and, less so, the following Jamdet Nasr period, communities with characteristics essentially those of southern Mesopotamia/southwestern Iran were established in widely dispersed sections of Western Asia. Similar communities may already have existed during the earlier Chalcolithic phases; a number of sites in the Turkish highlands (for example, Değirmentepe) and sections of central Iran (Oates 1983:255; Zagarell 1982:27–29; n.d.) appear to have been involved in regional exchange systems. Indeed, the locations of the Uruk-phase settlements suggest awareness of the sources of particular materials that presumably reflects earlier Chalcolithic experience. Nevertheless,

the Ubaid/earlier Chalcolithic experience appears much more limited and unspecialized than the Late Chalcolithic/Uruk one. Despite the fact that large areas have not yet been intensively surveyed, Uruk/Jamdet Nasr/southern Mesopotamian assemblages have been found in key areas of the Near East: in northern Mesopotamia (Nineveh and Tell Brak), eastern Turkey (a series of sites along the Euphrates, including Arslan-Malatya, Tepeçik, and Hassek), eastern Syria (Habuba Kabira Sud, Tell Qannas, and Jebel Aruda), the Zagros region (Godin Tepe, Sharak, Malyan, and Tepe Yahya), and the Iranian central plateau (Sialk IV). During the following Jamdet Nasr period evidence of this kind persists, although to a more limited degree (mainly in the form of tombs or stopping points along the Arabian coast). Many of these Late Uruk sites are found near contemporary communities with local regional assemblages (for example, Gawra, in northern Mesopotamia, and Godin, on the northern flank of the central Zagros). Not infrequently these local assemblages contain nonlocal objects, indicating interaction between Mesopotamian-connected and local communities (for example, occasional bevelled-rim bowls at Tepe Gawra and in the Amuq). Mesopotamian/southwestern Iranian influences were quickly spreading into the far corners of the Near East, including Egypt during the Gerzean (Amiet 1980:39; Kantor 1954:fig. 3). Although the mechanism of these influences is unclear, there are signs of the possible arrival of Mesopotamian peoples. Indirect connections have been posited for Eastern Europe (see Zanotti 1983; Hood 1974, 1967; Falkenstein 1965; but cf. Renfrew 1979:152–53), where large-scale communities were appearing (see, for example, Milisauskas 1978:161–65 and especially Smaglia 1982). Connections are also indicated for the northern Iranian central region (Majidzadeh 1978), with ties possibly stretching into Central Asia (Masson 1981:89; Kohl 1981a:xxx). By the end of the Jamdet Nasr period, most of these “colonies” had disappeared with the development of the long-distance exchange described by Kohl and others.

These communities confront us with a series of problems. Why do they suddenly appear and then just as quickly disappear? What is their function, and how do they relate to the new mode of production that seems to be flourishing in the Mesopotamian context? They cannot be explained as simply natural population growth, the budding-off of new communities. Certainly Mesopotamian population was increasing (Adams 1981), but within the Mesopotamian heartland there appears to have been in-migration, not out-migration. If it had been simply a matter of geographical expansion, one would expect the random placement of sites in suitable environments rather than their distribution along the major interregional trade routes, often at critical nodes. From their positioning it may be assumed that the movement of goods played a role in their founding. At the same time, despite their close ties with Mesopotamian/southwestern Iranian Uruk and Jamdet Nasr sites, these communities differed significantly from one another. For example, sites in the Zagros region range from what appear to be way-stations or, more likely, ports of trade (Sharak, Qal'e Tol, perhaps Godin Tepe) interfacing with locally ruled areas (Zagarell n.d.) to larger settlements dominating entire regions (Malyan, Tepe Yahya). Sites to the west, along the Euphrates (Habuba Kabira/Qannas/Jebel Aruda), seem to be agriculturally based, self-sufficient fortified communities whose exact relation with surrounding communities has yet to be determined. Similarly, in eastern Turkey (Tepeçik, Samsat, Hassek, Arslan-Malatya), some of the Uruk/Jamdet Nasr sites appear to be large, self-sufficient administrative centers. These Uruk “colonies” would seem to have been adapting to local environmental and political conditions. Although they all seem related in some way to the movement of goods, the way that task was carried out must have varied according to region, just as the types of goods sought and exchanged must have varied. For example, the extreme

northern, Turkish communities were probably seeking metals, the eastern ones lapis lazuli, copper, and turquoise, among other goods.

While these communities seem to have been involved in the movement of goods and the exploitation of desired regional resources (see, for example, Lamberg-Karlovsky 1975:358), it is improbable that they were “merchant colonies,” communities peopled by independent entrepreneurs. The Uruk communities of the western Zagros (Godin Tepe, Sharak) may have been small groups of “merchants,” but this explanation is less likely for Tepe Yahya (Lamberg-Karlovsky 1975) and highly improbable for the other Zagros, Syrian, and some Turkish sites, which manifest all the characteristics of full-fledged, autonomous urban communities. The large number of bevelled-rim bowls found in these sites is powerful testimony to the existence and significance of a local public/communal mode of production. Since, as I have suggested, these vessels are generally thought to be related to the ration system, their presence indicates the utilization of rationed labor in these newly exploited regions. Moreover, the large numbers of seals and sealings indicate that the same system of bureaucratic controls that was at work in Mesopotamia was operating in this foreign context. The seals and sealings depict work scenes directly related to the public/communal labor system (Van Driel 1983:36; Strommenger 1980:55, fig. 43). Most of the larger sites are full-fledged communities with an entire spectrum of economic activities, not simply rump communities of merchants. The larger ones have administrative, economic, and sacred areas. Habuba Kabira/Qannas/Jebel Aruda is a complete community in itself, manifesting central planning and large-scale collective labor; the same is true of Malyan. Agriculture plays an important role (see, for example, Lamberg-Karlovsky 1978). These are basically self-sufficient communities with a very strong administrative aspect. It is not impossible that, in certain areas, hegemonic controls brought them tribute in goods or labor service. Indeed, even for the Zagros rim (Godin, Sharak), where smaller sites might support communities of specialized households—for example, merchants—it is improbable that we are dealing with a group of independent merchants. If one accepts the function of the bevelled-rim bowl expounded here, it is difficult to understand why large numbers of such bowls are found at such sites if these communities were simply merchant colonies; they can have had no important economic function in a merchant context. It is possible, however, that the bowls played a symbolic role, reflecting sacred or administrative dominance. Thus, I am suggesting that we are dealing with varied settlements. Some are clearly self-sufficient communities, others less so. All seem to have been involved in exchange networks, yet all reflect administration. Whether that administration was temple- or palace-dominated is unclear.

Non-Mesopotamian communities were certainly influenced by this expansion. All the communities drawn into the nexus created by the Mesopotamian expansion must have been altered to some degree. How they were altered apparently varied, however, as did the “colonies” themselves. At certain sites large numbers of bevelled-rim bowls have been found, but in the context of local pottery assemblages (see, for example, Majidzadeh 1978). Communities were either copying the new Mesopotamian productive mode or selecting its symbols (where bevelled-rim bowls are extremely common, the former appears more likely). Moreover, the evidence from Arslantepe indicates a locally run community, despite strong Mesopotamian influences (Palmieri 1981:106). Communities were drawn into the exchange nexus, especially along its fringes, specializing in the production of particular goods (for example, at Ghabristan, pottery and metals), which both encouraged and reflected local social differentiation.



The picture painted here closely resembles that drawn by the various epic tales of the "Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta" cycle (see Wilcke 1969, Berlin 1979, Cohen 1973). In poetic form these stories describe a central authority with a strong sacral aspect playing the key role in organizing intercommunity exchange. Exchange is on the community-to-community level rather than on an individual merchant-to-merchant level. Moreover, the goods exchanged are pictured as community products. Power is seen as an expression and reflection of community/state productive power and administrative control. Exchange and political domination are closely related; in fact, the goal of the participants is not exchange per se but the flow of dependent corvée labor and prestige goods from one community to another. Military activity and threats of violence, temporary moments of dependence, play an important part in negotiating relations between communities.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Mesopotamian/Iranian "colonies" were, it seems, encouraged by the various central urban authorities—although the connection cannot have been direct—and were engaged in the movement of goods and the exploitation of nonlocal resources. The reason they were encouraged was not simply the acquisition of raw materials but the expansion of the central authority based on the new public/communal production mode. The greater the use of encumbered, public (often female) productive labor, the greater the centrally organized public power over the kin base. The expansion of exchange networks, coercively when necessary, increased the relative power of the new production mode vis-à-vis other modes, both quantitatively and symbolically. It legitimated, indeed demanded, the expansion of the bureaucracy and control over resources, including the use of writing, numerical controls, inventory, access controls (seals), scribes, and administrators. By competing with the kin base this new production mode created instability where there was order and then recreated order in the form of administrative integration.

The preeminence of the Mesopotamian "colonies" was relatively short-lived. Within a few hundred years most of them had been abandoned. The particular reasons may have varied. Foreign population movements may have been partly responsible for the disappearance of Uruk- and Jamdet Nasr-related communities. In some cases (for example, Habuba Kabira) there is evidence of destruction. A more fundamental cause may have been a combination of the increasing sophistication of the surrounding communities, with their own emerging complex societies, and an increasing struggle for dominance among the urban centers of the Mesopotamian and Khuzistan plains. This does not mean, however, that the exchange systems engendered by the Late Uruk/Jamdet Nasr expansion would have collapsed, since the elites of the surrounding regions, as well as the central Mesopotamian communities, would have needed sources of power outside their own kin communities. And, in fact, there are no indications of a decline in exchange. Rather, there appears to have been an expansion of exchange, as Kohl (1975, 1978, 1979) has documented.

It is unclear when large-scale internal commodification first occurred—that is, when individuals began to fall into debt. I suggest that it could not have occurred before the Uruk period and probably not before the Late Uruk. With the massive expansion of exchange relationships and the concomitant large-scale use of "merchants" characteristic of the Uruk, there was increasing opportunity for individual mercantile initiative. By the Early Dynastic, the period for which Kohl and others have presented evidence of commodity production and independent merchants, individuals, particularly those with responsible positions, were exploiting their powers to amass wealth and goods. Although this was the practice of both high

and low officials, low-level corruption weakens the hand of the central authority while creating dissatisfaction at the base.

The "reforms of Uruningina" reflect the chaos that accompanied the increasing role of wealth, money, debt, and commodities within the Sumerian community. Despite the difficulty of interpreting the changes proposed (Foster 1981), the reforms certainly restricted the raw use of power by lower-level officials. Power was concentrated in the hands of the ruler, who was held to rule as representative of the gods. New institutions were established (Maekawa 1973–74), expanding the public/communal production mode at the expense of the kin mode. Thus, an outlet was provided for the tensions engendered by the new commodity relations and the emergence of a new elite combining political influence and individual wealth. Women's labor played a key role in this social revolution. While on the domestic level women's labor and reproductive power were important, on the public level they were revolutionary. The public exploitation of large numbers of women was critical in the original accumulation of wealth and power outside the control of the kin groups, giving rise to the unrivaled power of state officials. The implication of this for the apparent loss of women's status cannot be overlooked. The process of strengthening this power then gave rise to a merchant class and the possibility of amassing wealth on a nonkinship basis. This new form of property existed alongside the other forms for a very long time. Neither merchant organization of production nor production for profit nor commodity production ever became dominant in this early Mesopotamian social formation. To understand the role of merchant and commodity in Mesopotamia is to emphasize their coexistence with large state/temple centers of production, extended-family units, and private property and the changing structural positions of these through time.

## Comments

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With this far-reaching topic, Zagarell sets himself a large task. In broad terms I can accept his thesis, and therefore I limit my comment to two problems.

First, I want to oppose the mislabeling in Near Eastern studies of the palace and temple economy as a "public" or "state-owned" sector as contrasted with a "private" sector. Contradictory forms of property (we are basically concerned here only with control over the means of production) are characteristic of class society. Earlier types of society were based upon the common property of the community as a whole. Implicitly this collective property of primitive society is identified with the "public" property of a class society, and this is an error. The so-called public sector, consisting of palace and temple property, is under the control of only a part of the society and is in its social function a type of private property, the opposite of real communal property. The control of kings or high priests over their respective means of production differs only in minor ways from that of owners of landed property or workshops, large or small. The mistake is the confusion of state and classless society. The restriction of the term "private property" to the direct control over the means of production by individuals is misleading in excluding "public" property from this category and thereby obscuring its exploitative character. The historically important difference is whether producer himself or someone else has control over the means of production. Between these extremes there are many variant forms, and the "public" property of the societies of the ancient East undoubt-

edly represents one pole—in which the means of production of propertyless producers are controlled by rulers.

The second problem is the explanation of the function of the “Uruk” settlements outside the core area. Habuba Kabira’s location on the branch of the Euphrates nearest the Mediterranean suggests a commercial role—as the destination of caravans and a river port—but not a single West Syrian item, not even a sherd, seems to have been found there. Could it have been a way-station on the route to the copper mines on the Upper Euphrates? There is no evidence of this unless we so consider the “Uruk” buildings at Arslantepe.

The emphasis here on the division of labor by sex in temples and palaces is interesting. It remains to be investigated whether the assertion of the predominance of women among temple slaves is generally applicable or limited to particular temples.

The article covers very interesting topics and answers sociological questions with archaeological material.

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Zagarell’s paper represents a stimulating beginning to the long process of critical evaluation of both the relevant Near Eastern archaeological sources and the theoretical construct that bears the weight of his interpretation. I believe that this paper provides a useful framework for analytical and interpretive archaeological research on the changing Mesopotamian political economy in the 4th–3d millennia B.C. My comments are restricted to two issues: (1) Zagarell’s insistence that the past is, or must be, different from the present and his lack of clarity on this issue and (2) his generalizations about Upper Euphrates Anatolian sites.

Zagarell’s thesis is very tightly argued. Perhaps this makes it thought-provoking, but it also leads to open-ended questions. One such question stems from his point that the past is often interpreted on the basis of what “we ‘know’ from our own times.” Although he stresses that the dominant mode of production is the most important one in evaluating the past, he argues, for example, that nothing capitalistic (a merchant organization of production, production for profit, commodity production) became dominant in Mesopotamia. Nevertheless, his characterization of the transformation from a kinship to a public/communal mode involves such factors as local and long-distance trade, “colonies,” military forays/“imperialism,” hegemony, the exploitation of women, slaves (helot-like or not), and communal labor combined with the possible existence of private mercantilism/entrepreneurship. Zagarell does not juxtapose these referents in the past and the present as would be necessary to demonstrate the differences. Furthermore, these terms and the way they are combined parallel much of what has been developed in analyses of the “new imperialism” and “empires” in general (see, for a recent example, Doyle 1986). Zagarell seems to build his argument in relation to a particular but *unstated* view of the present social relations of production. This leads to a lack of clarity in his theoretical construction.

Zagarell’s generalizations about the Upper Euphrates Anatolian sites need further examination. He mentions Arslantepe, Tepeçik, Hassek, Samsat, and Değirmen-tepe. In lumping these sites in the *cultural-typological* category of “Uruk/Jamdet Nasr/southern Mesopotamian assemblages” and the *functional* categories of “trading communities” and “administrative centers,” Zagarell fails to make clear the variations among them. In addition, his terminology is both confusing and inappropriate for sites in Anatolia. Although he pays close attention to Arslantepe at Malatya (a locally governed community tied to Mesopotamia through trade relations), he appears

to assign the Euphrates sites to a single functional category because of their location near the river. They are tied to Mesopotamia (bevelled-rim bowls, etc.) by their proximity to resources and possibly by imperial motives, both of which are necessary for a communal mode of production. When one looks at the highlands (Zagros, Iranian and Anatolian plateaus) surrounding lowland Mesopotamia, it is clear that settlements were varied, but in looking at the Upper Euphrates Valley Zagarell seems to find only one reason for their existence.

Despite these criticisms, the cultural sequence at Kurban Höyük in southeastern Turkey seems to corroborate Zagarell’s model of change in the Mesopotamian modes of production. Kurban Höyük is a double-mounded site on a terrace of the Upper Euphrates several kilometers southwest of and downstream from Samsat and Lidar. It was excavated in 1980–84 by an Oriental Institute team headed by Leon Marfoe (Algaze et al. 1986, Algaze n.d., Marfoe n.d.). The larger south mound was established in Halaf Period VIII. Kurban in this period was but one of several Halaf settlements situated near springs on terraces of the Euphrates. In the following Period VII, the Middle Chalcolithic, the north mound was established and the south mound abandoned. Settlement had shifted to the north of the spring. Apparently, basalt and chipped-stone blades were imported into the region during this period. The south mound was resettled in Period VIB, a “Pre-Uruk” phase, and both the south and north mound were inhabited in the following Period VIB, the “Late Uruk” phase. Amuq F chaff-faced pottery predominates in Period VIB, but there are no Mesopotamian/Late Uruk wares or forms. In VIA, grit-tempered plain simple wares predominate along with Uruk wares and forms such as the bevelled-rim bowl, four-lugged jars, drooping spouts, strap-handled jars, and conical cups with string-cut bases. That large nucleated centers arose in this period, as Zagarell suggests, is confirmed at Kurban and in its vicinity (e.g., Lidar, Samsat). Excavated exposures at Kurban are too small to determine whether or not the settlement was a town at this time, but it certainly was part of a network of settlements in the region. Sites were no longer located on upland terraces, and on the lower terraces population densities appear to have increased and cultivated area was extended. Finally, manufactured copper appeared for the first time, while subsistence practices and local exchange in stone resources continued from the previous period. In the following Period V there was a small village on the north mound only. The ceramic assemblage differs from that of the Late Chalcolithic and contains no chaff-tempered wares. Late Uruk Mesopotamian forms vanish, with only a number of plain simple grit-tempered wares continuing in use. Many new forms of Anatolian affinity occur in this period. In the surrounding region, the previous nucleated settlements dispersed into small, scattered villages. The Late Uruk dominance of the region apparently had been short-lived but undoubtedly had a lasting impact. Local elites emerged in this period, and although local exchange continued the establishment of long-distance trade was nowhere visible except perhaps in the presence of “traded” manufactured copper. The scattered settlements of Period V were succeeded in Period IV by a fortified town, with internally differentiated activity areas, new herding and agricultural strategies, long-distance trade, varied ceramic shapes and forms, and the apparent establishment of large centers in the region.

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The attempt to discuss the effects of interregional exchange upon primary state formation, to outline the development and



redefine the components of the Mesopotamian mode of production, and to explicate the political economy of late prehistoric/early historic Mesopotamia is, to say the least, ambitious. The attempt to do so in a single article might be regarded as overconfident. That Zagarell has managed to succeed at all is a measure of the importance of this study, however much we might have wished it to be more comprehensive (including at least some discussion of the origin and function of writing) and however much future excavation and research may force its refinement.

Using a rather interesting blend of (mainly) Marxist and substantivist approaches to economic prehistory, Zagarell argues that the "public/communal mode of production" was able to attain an adequate level of production beyond subsistence ("surplus"), to systematize (via accounting, writing, scribes, seals) the increasing "commodification" of society, to increase production for intensified demand through the use of (mainly foreign, mainly female) slaves, and thus—with the benefits from and the means to expand an interregional exchange system—to transform the "successful chiefdoms" of the Late Ubaid/Early Uruk era into the complex state of the Late Uruk/Early Dynastic era. To the long list of processes offered to explain state formation, we may now add what might be called—mixing archaeological metaphors—the S-Transform: surplus—systematization—slavery—exchange system—state.

This is the "what" of Zagarell's thesis. The "when" is the Uruk/"Late Chalcolithic" period, late 4th millennium B.C. (A simple comparative chronological table linking common "material" terms with the more traditional Mesopotamian "cultural" terms and providing B.C./b.c. dates would have been helpful.) Archaeological data cited as evidence for the emergence of the public/communal mode of production seem accurate: bevelled-rim bowls; seals/sealings that represent herding, storage, and human labor in the "public" sector; increase in monumental ("community") structures; population movements (into "successful chiefdoms"). What seems to be the one weak link in the chain is the use of captive female labor, "the *earliest* stage in the emergence of public/communal production" (my emphasis). Virtually all the textual evidence cited to identify this female labor force is late Early Dynastic; the women's status as slaves or "helots" is disputed; it seems likely that some sort of sexual division of labor was still in force during late Early Dynastic times; to suggest that the majority of early highland "slaves" were "dependent women" is sheer speculation; and it threatens the credibility of the entire thesis to argue that these presumed captives "formed the backbone" of the public/communal mode of production and the resultant emergence of public, state power. I simply cannot see the evidence, much less the rationale, for this point.

The "where" of Zagarell's study is also the "how": the emergence of the public/communal mode of production is closely associated with the expansion of interregional exchange. Contemporary or near-contemporary trading communities/outposts in Syria, Turkey, northern Mesopotamia, the Zagros, and the central Iranian plateau are critical and appropriate to the discussion; those in the North Iranian or Central Asian areas are plausible but more problematic. The "indirect connections" posited for southeastern Europe or Egypt are probably spurious (on Egypt, see Ray 1986: 308–9). Discussion of the function of these "colonies" vis-à-vis Mesopotamia (exploitation and distribution of "goods," including prestige items and human labor) and vis-à-vis their respective geographic regions (self-sufficient agricultural communities with their own full spectrum of economic, administrative, and sacred functions) ties them neatly to Zagarell's scenario and at the same time shows how much is still to be learned from these primary nodes, regional centers, or local "stations" in the contemporary "world economic" system (Kohl 1979, 1982).

Zagarell's analysis of the Mesopotamian "trade colonies" indicates a very close connection among internal production and

demand, external trade, and state formation: the public/communal mode of production necessitated and thus promoted intercommunity exchange on a massive scale at the *institutional*, not the *individual*, level. The interrelationship between production and exchange and the legitimization of the accompanying bureaucracy quickened the pace of state formation in late 4th-millennium-B.C. Mesopotamia (for similar arguments about state formation in 2d-millennium-B.C. Cyprus, see Knapp 1986).

Since Zagarell indicates at the outset that he wishes to view early Mesopotamian exchange "as part of the changing complex of [the] social relations of production" and thus to push to the foreground "central societal institutions," it is to his credit that an entirely plausible explanation has been offered for the emergence of *independent* merchant activity. Put briefly, in the process of furthering the productive output of the state (through the public/communal mode of production), the increasing importance of wealth acquisition and commodity production permitted the rise of a mercantile elite (by the end of the Early Dynastic period) that could amass wealth on a non-kinship basis. Other scenarios are equally plausible. Zagarell's "trade colonies," for example, bear further scrutiny in light of Curtin's (1984) extensive cross-cultural analysis of "trade diasporas." Not only do these "diasporas" exhibit functions similar to those of the Mesopotamian "colonies," notably specialization in the procurement and distribution of raw materials/goods in demand and location at critical nodes in an interregional exchange system, they also tend to "work themselves out of business" for a variety of reasons (Curtin 1984:3–5). Could such "cross-cultural brokers" (Curtin's term) also have manned, and eventually abandoned, the Uruk/Jemdet Nasr-related communities of greater Ancient Western Asia? How, where, and when one sees productive specialization and entrepreneurial activity depends, to a great extent, upon one's disciplinary leanings (consider, for example, Earle 1985, North 1981). If case studies in economic archaeology/anthropology over the past decade have taught us anything, it is that individuals and entrepreneurial activity abound in prehistoric settings (see, e.g., various articles in Hirth 1984).

Kohl recently stated, and Zagarell would certainly agree, that "a political archaeology is needed to elaborate and make more meaningful the economic interpretation of prehistory" (1981b:111). I would reply that an economic archaeology based on analyses of socio-historical patterns and politico-ideological processes makes more likely a viable interpretation of prehistory. Zagarell has presented a persuasive interpretation of politico-economic development and change in Protoliterate/Early Dynastic Mesopotamia. As a working hypothesis, it deserves careful consideration and discussion by all Mesopotamianists and by anyone interested in the complex relationship among intensification of production, long-distance exchange, and state formation.

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This is a thoughtful and well-informed contribution which offers some original insights and argues against some commonly held notions. Zagarell is essentially concerned with Mesopotamia, and he is correct, but only partially, when he states that "Early Mesopotamian exchange should be approached as part of the changing complex of social relations of production, affecting and being affected by the various modes of production, consumption, and distribution that characterized Mesopotamian society." As he is aware, Mesopotamia was at least from the late 4th millennium directly affected by its growing involvement with an ever-expanding outside world. Already in the earliest Uruk texts (3300 B.C.) we have mention of com-

merce with Dilmun (Englund 1983), believed by Potts (1983) and others to have been located in northeastern Arabia prior to its mid-3d-millennium incorporation of Bahrain. Even prior to the Uruk period, Mesopotamian involvement with distant regions is indicated by Ubaid ceramics recovered from Tal-i-Iblis (Caldwell 1967) and Tepe Yahya (Beale 1986), while Kohl (personal communication) reports Ubaid and Halaf ceramics from the distant Caucasus. It seems reasonable to assume that the structuring of trade and the formation of class society is already well under way by the Ubaid period.

It is Zagarell's central thesis "that centralized production with public/communal labor was critical for the emergence of state power and the creation of the conditions allowing commodity relations and independent merchant activity [and] that the state took an active role in furthering state production but, perhaps quite unintentionally, created the conditions in which independent merchants could emerge. . . ." Furthermore, we are told that the public/communal sector "was directly related to the emergence of the state." Who and what, then, is this "public/communal sector"? We are informed that the extended-family (kinship-corporate) units underwent "dissolution" and that the laborers in the public institutions (temples and palaces) became subordinated to, that is, fell under the direct control of, the state, thus forming the public/communal sector of the society. Thus we are told, on the one hand, that the public/communal sector of the state was important to the *emergence* of the state and, on the other hand, that it was the state that subordinated this public/communal sector. This dialectical process, not inherently contradictory, requires definition and clarification. I would suggest the following: The temple and the palace were but two of the three pillars that structured Sumerian civilization. From an evolutionary perspective, at the dawn of that civilization the temple organization and the community (what Zagarell refers to as the extended-family [kinship-corporate] unit) were not differentiated. The community consisted of households of agnates—father, mother, unmarried sons and daughters, and married sons, wives, and children, all forming a family commune, some of which were attached to temple lands, others independent of temple administration. Several independent family communes, related or unrelated, formed a territorial community. The independent family commune was headed by a senior patriarch, whereas the territorial community had a collective government headed by a council of elders composed of the most important headmen of the family communes (Diakonoff 1982:53–62). I would suggest that the increasing bureaucratic dealings structuring the relations of power between the council of elders, temple administration, and headmen of independent family communes may well have formed the primary cell for the creation of the state sector. The family communes and territorial communities were increasingly absorbed into the more powerful patronage of the temple economies and "houses" of the rulers and nobility. By the end of the 3d millennium only the temple and royal estates were large enough to separate consistently the full-time specialization of the crafts from agricultural work. Craftsmen obtained carefully allocated raw resources for the manufacture of their products, while the finished goods were strictly accounted for by the bureaucracy of temple or palace. No data exist for the *free* outside sale of finished products manufactured by the artisans of the temples and/or palaces before the mid-2d millennium; both production and distribution were in the hands of the "Great Organizations," the temples and palaces.

By the Early Dynastic III period, the point of departure for Zagarell's discussion of long-distance trade, the ruler already combined the functions of military (*lugal*) and civilian (*ensi*) leader with that of head priest (*en* or *sanga*). The subordination of the temples to the king not only allowed him increasing autocratic control over surplus grain, imported raw materials, and laborers but provided him prestige and legitimation de-

rived from the temple's role as intermediary between the community and the deities.

Zagarell's discussion of the Uruk "colonies" is, in my view, entirely correct and applies to those of the Proto-Elamites on the Iranian Plateau as well. They were not "merchant colonies" but "self-sufficient communities with a very strong administrative aspect." Zagarell is uncertain whether their administration was temple- or palace-dominated. I would suggest that in the case of Tepe Yahya it was neither. The texts of Yahya refer to very limited numbers of sheep/goats, bread rations (?), etc., more suitable to an administered community of very limited size, an independent "extended-family (kinship/corporate) unit" as defined by Zagarell. It is equally significant that settlement pattern studies in the vicinity of Yahya have revealed only one other site of this date. It is thus extremely doubtful that the "colony" of Yahya was part of an extensive hierarchical state structure or controlled its local area (Lamberg-Karlovsky 1985a).

The author is undoubtedly correct in perceiving the "reforms of Urukagina" as reflecting the chaos which accompanied increasing differential wealth, money, and debt, in short, the exploitation of the many by the few. These royal reform edicts played a special role throughout Mesopotamian history that Zagarell overlooks. Central to the concepts that structured the relations of the rulers and the ruled in Mesopotamia are, in Old Babylonian terms, *andurarum* (Sumerian *ama.ar.gi*) and *misharum* (Sumerian *nig.si.sa*), rendered respectively as "freedom" and "equality" (equity). Mesopotamia throughout its 3,000-year history consisted for the most part of individual city-states and kingdoms, only rarely achieving a unity of empire. Throughout the 3d millennium the Sumerian city-state was the political center of gravity, exercising at most a variable control over neighboring autonomous tribes and a not wholly integrated village countryside. The focus of the state was the city, and its focus in turn was first the temple(s) and later the palace—dual and distinctive entities in constant tension embodying reciprocal actions, often competitive in nature. Mesopotamian unity, insofar as it existed, was evident in the royal social decrees: *misharum* and *andurarum*, proclamations of freedom and equality. Royal decrees constituting social reforms are well known from the texts of ancient Mesopotamia, involving different rulers from different city-states: King Entemena of Lagash (2404–2375 B.C.), Urukagina of Uruk (2351–2342 B.C.), Ur-Nammu of Ur (2112–2095 B.C.), Lipit-Ishtar of Isin (1934–1924 B.C.), Hammurabi of Babylon (1792–1750 B.C.), and Nebuchadnezzar (1126–1105 B.C.), to mention but a few. It is important to recognize that the benevolence expressed in these royal decrees masks their net effect and purpose, the strengthening of palace authority through the practice of *Realpolitik* (Lamberg-Karlovsky 1985b).

We are indebted to Zagarell for his insightful essay. It commands our respect in its judicious use of Mesopotamian textual evidence and archaeological data in presenting the complexity that characterized the 3d millennium in the Near East. It is refreshing to confront a work that eschews the mechanistic simplicity of taxonomic approaches addressing site or decision-making hierarchies, in which such categories as women, class, trade, and society are all but lost.

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I find much to admire in Zagarell's attempt to restructure our understanding of the political and economic organization of early Mesopotamian society. His article is a welcome movement away from archaeological attempts to impose entrepreneurial models that ascribe capitalist goals, processes, and

motivations to the prehistoric and ancient world. I am also cheered that he raises the issue of gender stratification in the development of Mesopotamian history and links the development of gender inequality with the development of class stratification.

In his analysis Zagarell postulates the existence of three modes of production: kin, private-estate, and public/communal. I feel that he does not go far enough in discussing the articulation of these three modes and that as a result we do not get a very clear picture of their changing structural positions through time. His discussions of the connections between them would have benefited from a more explicit concern with how they were reproduced.

Zagarell talks about the kin mode as something inherited from the past and "dissolving" in the time periods that he is concerned with. It seems more likely that it was being transformed as it entered into articulation with the other two modes. An increasing burden of debt and resulting loss of household labor would have necessitated a change in the relations that structured the kin mode of production. Zagarell's suggestion that most of the "helots" drawn from the kin mode were women implies a declining status for women in the kin mode as gender relations were reproduced in terms of the growing class relations in the state (see Gailey 1985).

Zagarell links the dissolution of the kin mode to the rise of the private elite estates. His discussions indicate that the public/communal mode depended, at least in part, on the existence of the kin mode for its reproduction. He identifies two major sources for the unfree labor exploited by the public/communal mode, debtors drawn from the kin mode and war captives. The private estates and the public/communal mode would appear to have been in competition for the debtors to fill their labor needs. The increase that Zagarell sees in the use of war captives over time might result from the decline of the kin mode and/or changes in the nature of competition between the elite estates and the palace and temple necessitating a more aggressive and coercive form of labor recruitment by the state.

Zagarell persuasively argues that the public/communal mode of production created the conditions necessary for the emergence of the private estates, but he does not extensively discuss how the articulation of these two modes would have transformed each and the society in general. This would appear to leave the door open for a potentially pointless debate over the dominance of either the private estates or the temple and palace instead of the examination of the changing structural positions of multiple modes of production that Zagarell desires.

by KAREN BRODKIN SACKS

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This paper is interesting in that it combines a mode-of-production approach to class and state formation with models that come from some of the newer anthropological scholarship on women. Zagarell's central point is that it was not independent and entrepreneurial merchants who were the driving force for Mesopotamian state creation. Instead, that force lay in the creation of a "public/communal mode of production" based on a class of estate-owning officials sustained by a class of unfree laborers. This form of productive and political organization expanded by attacking kinship-based ownership, production, and power. To be sure, class and kinship forms coexisted and interpenetrated even as they competed. In Mesopotamia, then, the economic and political dynamic that led to the emergence of the state is said to be a complex process by which religious and secular officials made themselves rulers and ultimately a class. They did so at the expense of and in contrast to some (albeit not well-understood) form of kin-group-controlled organization of production and polity. Evi-

dence is presented of kin groups' being pressed into selling land and selling members into debt and temple slavery; thus kin groups contribute directly to the enrichment of private estates. Indeed, unfree labor is said to be the key form of labor in these palace and temple units. As these estates eclipse kin-based production, so too does slave and semifree labor and status loom ever larger than free and family, and private ownership gains at the expense of collective rights.

Zagarell argues that slave women were a major form of labor on temple estates because male captives tended to be killed and that the work of these women "was critical in the original accumulation of wealth and power outside the control of the kin groups, giving rise to the unrivaled power of state officials" and, concomitantly, to the subordination of women as a gender. Such an inverse relationship between women's status and state formation has been widely discussed and variously theorized (Conkey and Spector 1984), and Zagarell suggests a model of conflict between private/official estates and kin groups that is similar to what I found in the histories of several emergent African states (Sacks 1979).

To pursue this line of analysis further requires abandoning what seems to be an implicit assumption that gender carried a unitary status—or that the status of *all* women can be understood from the loss of freedom of some. Zagarell points out that some women were high administrators and had high status, particularly on temple estates reliant on the labor of unfree women. If that is so, "woman" was not likely to be equated with "slave" or "helot," and we still do not know whether or how women's status was influenced by the rise of class society. I suspect that the answer will be found in the *relationship* of kin-group organization to official estates and the emergent state. It is not clear whether that information exists or can be reconstructed from records of later periods. Nevertheless, this would seem to be the next step for a better and necessarily gendered understanding of the dynamics by which social classes were created and created themselves in a primary state. In any event, this is a welcome and stimulating application of cultural and feminist theory to archeological interpretation.

by ELIZABETH C. STONE

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Although Zagarell's basic line of inquiry is of great interest, his article is flawed both by lack of articulation between the hypothesis and the available evidence and by uncritical assessment of the work of philologically oriented Assyriologists.

His assumption of minimal interaction and overlap between individuals in different economic sectors, especially in the discussion of the "helots" (so described because they are listed as the recipients of "rations"), seems to me a problem. The most frequent category of persons so recorded is the *šub-lugal* or, later, *guruš*. The *šub-lugal* receive "rations" that are minimally 257 kg of grain per year (Tyumenev 1969:102), a little above basic subsistence needs (Clark and Haswell 1970:58), and often much more substantial, suggesting that the use of the term "rations" might reflect more the cultural bias of our moneyed economy than the true nature of the transaction involved. In the myth of Gilgamesh and Agga, the king, Gilgamesh, must consult two city councils before he can wage war. One of these consists of the *guruš* of the city (Kramer 1949:2, 7, 8). These factors, together with their military significance, suggest that these individuals are merely members of the private sector under periodic obligation to the state rather than a social class.

The same may apply to the women described in temple records, most of whom were employed as weavers. In the Ur III period, at least, they worked not in the city itself but in the towns and villages of the hinterland (Jacobsen 1970:222). Their dependent status in texts may be more a reflection of

their interaction with the state than of their larger position in society.

Zagarell's argument that the development of cylinder-seal motifs depicting persons engaging in agricultural activities reflects what he has termed public/communal production seems weak. Surely no one would argue that agriculture, potting, and weaving were activities new to the Protoliterate period. In any event, the sex of most of those involved cannot be determined from the seals.

The relationship between the "colonies" and the Mesopotamian heartland seems more complicated than his presentation suggests—especially in that the tablets with more than just numerals found at these sites are written in Proto-Elamite, not a Mesopotamian script. Evidence from seals also suggests that at least the Iranian sites were more closely tied to Susa than to sites in Mesopotamia proper (Weiss and Young 1975:14), an inference clearly at odds with Zagarell's suggestion that it was population displacements from Susiana to southern Mesopotamia that led to the development of the subject classes necessary for the "public/communal" economic sector. One may also note that Tepe Yahya's late-4th-millennium settlement area is less than 2 hectares (Lamberg-Karlovsky 1970:5), hardly approaching a "full-fledged, autonomous urban community" and certainly not in the same class as 200-hectare Malyan (Sumner 1985:153).

In sum, while the central hypothesis is certainly of interest, in its present formulation it fails adequately to encompass all the available data. I look forward to a fuller development of this idea in the future.

by RITA P. WRIGHT

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This article presents a synthesis and an interpretive framework for a critical period in ancient Mesopotamian history. In it, Zagarell joins together documentary and archaeological evidence in a well-developed analysis of social evolution from the Neolithic through the Early Dynastic periods. This complementary use of archaeological and secondary (and primary) documents is the type of analysis that one hopes will become increasingly common in the work of anthropological archaeologists.

I have several comments to make, first on his interpretive framework and second on the tensions between the kin sector and the state. I believe that Zagarell's interpretation has much merit, especially in carrying forward Kohl's approach to regard consumption, production, distribution, and exchange as part of a single unit. This approach makes it easy to follow the link between economic and political acts. There is additional evidence which partially supports and partially contradicts Zagarell's analysis that may be of interest. This view, developed by Goodell (1986), is from the perspective of a political anthropologist interested in long-term political evolution and from the vantage point of agricultural labor. Like Zagarell, Goodell looks at structural discontinuities, but for her the discontinuities pertain to changes from status (lower orders of society have no leverage) to contract (lower orders of society have leverage in the political system). The former is based primarily upon the type of kinship unit that Zagarell outlines for the period before the Early Dynastic and the latter on that unit in its declined state after that period. Goodell, however, views this decline as signalling a freeing-up of agricultural labor. In other words, like the independent merchants cited by Zagarell, agricultural laborers, unencumbered by kinship ties ("footloose"), were free to cooperate with the state or to flee it. While this change constituted a critical breakthrough in the emergence of the state, ultimately it led to a state that was not vertically integrated with the base of society.

The second point relates to the tensions between the state and kin groups and the role played by women in the changing structural relations between them. These tensions appear to have been a continuing part of Mesopotamian life and one for which we have evidence in later periods. Documents from the ancient city of Sippar in the Old Babylonian period describe the business transactions of a special class of women, *naditu*, who lived in the Temple of Šamaš. *Naditu* were the daughters of wealthy families who joined the temple convent in lieu of marriage (*naditu* meaning "fallow"). Their relevance to the discussion relates to the dowry that each *naditu* brought to the cloister. This dowry remained in the control of the *naditu* throughout her lifetime, after which it was restored to her family. Harris (1975:307) has pointed out that this arrangement would have been economically advantageous to upper-class families in preventing "the diffusion of their wealth when a girl married and took her dowry to another family." There are, however, political implications as well (Wright n.d.), along the lines described by Zagarell. A large part of *naditu* business transactions was related to landholdings; for example, *naditu* purchased land adjacent to family fields, thereby increasing their overall size without drawing attention to the total size of the collective units; property was held and sold jointly by *naditu* and other family members; and *naditu* leased land to their brothers. What appears to have happened in these cases is that the individual *naditu* manipulated family holdings, taking advantage of her sheltered position in the cloister, apparently free of the surveillance of the crown. We know that in the contemporary city of Nippur the state was involved in acts that Stone (1977:280) has interpreted as motivated by "a desire . . . to break up . . . large families." Landholdings would have been particularly important, since in agrarian economies they are a basic resource and, as Goody (Goody, Thirsk, and Thompson 1976:5) puts it, "a material basis for perpetuation of the family line." The *naditu* institution provided an effective means to manipulate and to preserve family landholdings, as these holdings were inextricably linked to the political power and status of the family itself. While this form of exploitation of female labor differs from that of the lower-class women described by Zagarell for earlier periods, it seems clear that the *naditu*, whether they chose or were forced to choose life in the cloister, did so in the service of their kin.

Clearly, Zagarell's paper makes an important contribution to our understanding of Mesopotamian society and, moreover, presents us with a view that is bound to stimulate much future discussion.

by L. M. YOUNG

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Zagarell presents a compatible conceptual model of the economic evolution contributing to the growth of the early Mesopotamian city-state. He suggests that the temple/palace (the latter in the earlier stage seems to have served both functions) had a large share in the development of trade, exchange, and long-distance networks. Its function in this respect is exemplified in Jacobsen's (1971:17) discussion of early Mesopotamian religion, which implies that some deities, prior to their transmutation into an anthropomorphic guise, personified productive aspects and represented the economies of the territories in which their shrines were situated. Inanna, for example, signified the "numen of the storehouse." It is suggested that these institutions, while ostensibly serving a religious purpose, also acted as intermediary between the agriculturalists, whether of small units or large estates, and the industrial sectors, notably the potters, metalworkers, and tex-

tile weavers (probably women, either in single units or in large groups). Backed by the authoritative sanction of religion vested in the *en* (high priest) with power to allocate surpluses for exchange systems and conscript labour for communal projects, the complex quickly developed into a stratified organisation whose importance was reduced when the palace was separated from the temple and the *lugal* became dominant.

That there was a privatised sector, as Zagarell asserts, consisting of individual entrepreneurs is likely. It is probable that it largely concentrated on the more distant trading areas, where it would have had greater flexibility than temple/palace enterprises in exploiting routes and resources. It is impossible to deny that trade, exchange, and barter were widespread and extensive even during the protodynastic and Jemdet Nasr epochs. Zagarell cites several instances, and others might be mentioned, among them Inner Asia, the Indus Valley, and perhaps Bahrain, regarded by some as the Sumerian Dilmun (Bibby 1970:184). Undoubtedly the demand of the growing city-states for exotic materials stimulated extensive trade in these products. But others—obsidian, copper, and other such raw materials—were an economic necessity and engendered multiple interrelations between differing topographical and cultural areas, each having a surplus of commodities required by the others.

An interaction with a mechanism of this kind is clearly demonstrated by the exchange of maize, salt, cultigens, and fish between the highlands and the coastal preceramic cultures of the Andes (Burger 1985:274–75). A parallel is evinced in Mesopotamia itself, where the highlands, with a low agricultural yield but rich in raw materials including copper and turquoise, were complementary with the lowland city-states, with their rich agricultural productivity, fostered by irrigation (Lamberg-Karlovsky and Sabloff 1979:186). Kohl (1978) argues, as noted by Zagarell, that this interdependence created extensive trading networks manipulated by individual merchants or, more likely, merchant groups. It is possible that these were supplemented by other entrepreneurs without any particular loyalties who were experienced in resolving the logistical problems of transporting materials over enormous distances.

Zagarell proposes that a large number of settlements dispersed along interregional trade routes in northern Mesopotamia, eastern Turkey, and Iran were not Mesopotamian colonies resulting from geographical expansion but trading communities. If this is the explanation, then it seems remarkable that these settlements, as he himself indicates, disappear when the long-distance networks develop. His paper raises many interesting problems which merit detailed examination.

## Reply

by ALLEN ZAGARELL

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First, some general comments: I would like to thank those who took the time to write and offered many helpful comments. At no time did I intend my contribution to be anything more than a working hypothesis, as it is correctly called by Knapp. I wanted to critique the view that imposes what I understand as capitalist systemic logic and modes of behavior on societies radically different in structure from our own. To analyze the functional role and structural position of exchange necessitates the locating of exchange within a particular social formation, and this demands a holistic, dialectical examination of the society. Unfortunately, the archeological and written records do not provide us an unambiguous view of ancient Mesopotamian society; more about this below.

Ingraham questions my discomfort with concepts like “capita-

listic” to describe social sectors of societies which are historically precapitalist. In my view, a mode of production is not a list of attributes that can be separated from one another but an evolving whole (see, for example, Levins and Lewontin 1985:267–88 for a discussion of dialectics). Although such concepts have useful nonhistorical applications, they are culturally loaded, carrying with them unconscious assumptions which do not necessarily apply to the society in question. The key to capitalist society is not merchant activity per se but increasing commodification—the appearance of large numbers of “free workers,” stripped of and from productive property, whose labor power therefore becomes a commodity. These “free workers” gain access to productive resources only by selling to the owners of productive property their ability to work on a short-term basis. This is not simply salaried labor, in which the laborers may have other means of support. Capitalist social relations of production are, therefore, quite different from those typifying the ancient Near East.

I am most pleased by Ingraham’s discussion of the Anatolian materials. I do not have access to all the relevant literature or to the unpublished materials. I did not mean to imply that all Anatolian Uruk-related sites fulfilled one function. In fact, I assumed that they were just as varied in function as the Zagros communities. That variation was one of the central points I tried to convey. I especially appreciate the discussion of the materials from Kurban and its vicinity.

Wright presents an interesting point of view, particularly in regard to the atomization of agricultural labor through the breakup of extended-kin groups. I don’t have access to Goodell’s book, but it is not clear to me that the “lower orders” in status societies have less leverage than those in societies based on contractual relations. Both Wright and McGuire indicate that kinship continues to play a role after the emergence of the state. I fully agree. Kinship ties are still important today (see, for example, Stack 1975). Nevertheless, those relations were dissolving in Mesopotamia, as Wright notes in pointing to the “freeing-up” of agricultural labor, in the sense that they were losing their all-encompassing role; their areas of competence were becoming more limited. Productive property was coming under the control of smaller kin groups or political centers.

Knapp, although suggesting that my interpretation is persuasive, points to several problem areas. He states that the weak link in the argumentation is the question of female unfree labor as representing an early stage of dependent temple labor. He has difficulty seeing the evidence or the rationale for this point. Much of my argumentation would of course hold without it or, indeed, on the assumption of a system undergoing transition but still predominantly based on corvée labor. It is, however, not accidental that both Sacks and McGuire note the connection of decline in the status of women and the emergence of state society. The issue has been raised by many feminist scholars (for example, Gailey 1985, Muller 1977, Sacks 1979; for literature see Conkey and Spector 1984), noting how academic investigators have shied away from the question of male-female relations and the rise of civilization (see Rapp 1978:1). Rapp (1977:314) asserts that both men and women lose autonomy with the rise of state power, but “men and women lose it differently, and their lives are transformed differently.” As I stated, that dependent women played a key role in the emergence of the public/communal mode of production cannot be proven. It is not, however, sheer speculation but based on extrapolation. It is legitimate to question the applicability of Early Dynastic conditions to those of the preceding Late Chalcolithic Mesopotamia. But surely someone who recommends the use of historically recent cross-cultural and/or ethnographic data for the elucidation of economic archeological problems (for example, citing Curtin 1984) cannot reject the use of data from the same society a few hundred years removed as a possible model. The criterion must be that the same social systemic

logic is at work. The Early Dynastic data indicate that women are more likely to work for the temples than for the state sector (see, for example, Gelb 1972a:10 and repeatedly throughout his works). It is just this temple sector which predominates during the Late Uruk period. As I mentioned, several scholars have noted the tendency during the earlier historic periods, based on the limited military and administrative powers of the state, to kill males and take females prisoner. It is difficult to imagine that military and administrative controls were better developed during the preceding periods. It is perhaps appropriate to note that this view of recruited female labor and its status consequences parallels in several respects that of Adams (1984:114–17), which I have only recently been made aware of. Certainly, there was a division of labor during the Late Chalcolithic, but that labor need not have been organized in the same way. While I am uncertain whether the following has direct relevance here, in the Sumerian poem “Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven” the temple girls side with Inanna (i.e., with the temple sector) and the male craftsmen side with the state ruler Gilgamesh (Bing 1975). Sacks warns against what she sees as an implicit assumption that gender carried a unitary status or that the loss of freedom of some led to a loss of status for all. She may be right in suggesting that the answer is to be found in the relationship of kin organization to official estates and the emergent state. However, in this case, I believe that the effects on women can be compared to the shaky position of free, even slave-owning, ante-bellum southern blacks (Woodward 1985, and see Adams 1984:117).

I have little to add to Young’s contributions except to note that Mesopotamia and regional polities underwent major political alteration with the advent of the Early Dynastic periods, which, I propose, explains the disappearance of the “colonies.”

Stone finds the basic line of inquiry of interest but flawed. Disagreement about the kinds of issues discussed in the article is to be expected, but I have difficulty understanding the nature or usefulness of many of her suggestions. A number of her criticisms are not of my work but of that of others, and nowhere does she note their contributions. For example, she questions the use of “helot” as a category. The term has been employed by Diakonoff (1976), and although Gelb usually uses the term “Gurush class” or “serf class,” he has also applied the term “helot” to this same body of people (Gelb 1979:24). There is no question that some of the groups I discussed overlap. For example, I mentioned debt amnesties. There has been a long discussion of the nature of this public/communal productive sector. Is it appropriate simply to cite a well-known 1949 text as if it represented a new revelation—especially given the fact that *guruš* simply means “able-bodied male,” Akkadian *ethu* (*Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*, s.v. “ETLU”)? Moreover, as Stone notes, it is used as a labor term only after the periods I am discussing and many hundreds of years after the supposed “event” in “Gilgamesh and Agga.” Finally, the female term utilized, *geme*, clearly denotes dependence. I am uncertain what type of labor system Stone imagines to exist. Perhaps it is *corvée*. *Corvée*, mass community labor, presumably played an important role, particularly in the late prehistoric periods, although its relative importance is unclear. It has, indeed, been suggested that we are confronted with a *corvée* system during the early historic phases of Mesopotamian history (Uchitel 1984), but this is not the generally accepted view (see, for example, Brinkman 1982, discussing the public/communal sector of later periods).

I am equally puzzled by Stone’s discussion of the word “rations.” Gelb (1965) devoted an entire article to explaining why we should use the term, and many scholars have done so. Pointing out that the “rations” supplied ranged from sufficient to more substantial, she suggests that the use of the term is inappropriate. Perhaps she sees something wrong or exploitative about rations per se. If so, she misunderstands. In my point of view, the level of economic exploitation is measured

by the difference between productive labor expended and that returned in social product, regardless of the form of payment. The nature of the payment, rations from large public institutions, is important in this case because, among many other things, it limits the expansion and development of commodity relations and creates the conditions for a powerful bureaucracy.

As to the question of the cylinder seals and their relationship to public/communal production, Stone is correct that no one would argue that agriculture, etc., were activities new to the Protoliterate period. But it has been argued that the relevant seals exhibit an administrative function (Nissen 1983:85–88). Moreover, many of the seal motifs include temple or cult symbols. The question, therefore, is not whether such activities occurred before, but why such scenes are suddenly applied to public administrative seals. My answer is that the activities pictured are those related to public/communal production. The question of the sex of the so-called pig-tailed-women seals is open to discussion. These seals do seem to me to refer to women’s labor, particularly since many of the activities pictured, including weaving, are known to have been activities assigned to women. Moreover, my impression is that where labor assignments are clearly those of men they are pictured differently. However, I did not carry out a detailed study of activities and possible gender depictions. Such a study would clearly be of interest.

Stone criticizes my discussion of the relationship of the “colonies” and the Mesopotamian heartland, despite the fact I do not use the “Mesopotamian heartland” as my point of departure. Again and again I refer to Mesopotamia and southwestern Iran (the center of the later “Proto-Elamite culture”). I am referring to production modes, not “Sumerian culture.” Nevertheless, the close ties between the material culture of Susa 18–17 (Late Uruk) and the “Mesopotamian heartland” have been noted (Alden 1982:622). Moreover, archeologists working in the area report that the Late Uruk-like sites in the Zagros all show varying degrees of penetration by a Late Uruk rather than Banesh-like complex. Only during the Jamdet Nasr period do we see a shift to a “Proto-Elamite culture” in the Iranian region (Levine 1982). Moreover, the entire alluvial lowland region experienced large-scale movements of populations during the relevant periods. Stone is, however, quite justified in correcting my indiscriminate lumping of Yahya with Malyan (in reality 45 hectares in the period under discussion [Sumner n.d.]). This indicates the high level of site diversity characterizing the so-called colonies.

Brentjes comments on aspects of early Mesopotamian property. It is, as he says, common for Near Eastern specialists to characterize temple and state “economies” as public or state sectors as opposed to private property. He emphasizes the exploitative nature of this sector and suggests its basic similarity to private property. I agree that this “public” sector is exploitative, but I disagree that it is simply a variant of private individually or nuclear-family-owned estates. First, I have argued that it and the private estates have separate though related histories. It represents at least the partial long-term transformation of community property (land and storage) to community collective exploitation of dependent labor of various forms and a resource for the transformation of community servants to community rulers. Although rulers utilized part of the wealth produced for their own sumptuary benefit, they were forced, at least periodically, to deny ownership. Moreover, it is this production mode, as opposed to others, that produces goods for wider distribution.

Lamberg-Karlovsky asks for greater clarity as to what constitutes the public/communal sector and then goes on to discuss the broadly accepted tripartite view of Mesopotamian society: temple/state/kin. Despite some minor differences, I am in



broad agreement with many of his comments. The temple certainly has a long history, but the temple in its function as major public production center (as opposed to storage center) only appears during the Late Chalcolithic, as far as I can see. During the Early Dynastic period it appears to be expanding. Sumerian society and its production modes have a history. The relative lack of attention by archeologists (who alone are able to clarify the prehistoric periods) to the social institutional forms of production as opposed to subsistence practices (the counting-calories syndrome) has meant that such questions have gone largely undiscussed.

Certainly, there is evidence of long-distance exchange during the earlier Chalcolithic (Ubaid/Halaf), but evidence of exchange reaches well into the Neolithic. The question here is not exchange per se but rather how exchange relates to the various forms of production, consumption, and political organization. Some social differentiation may be discerned during the Mesopotamian Ubaid, but I know of no evidence indicating stable class stratification until the very end of the Ubaid and particularly the Late Chalcolithic (Uruk/Jamdet Nasr).

The extended-family (kinship/corporate) characterization of Proto-Elamite Yahya may be correct. We certainly agree that it is an administered community. However, the technology utilized (administered storage/writing/rations), in my view, indicates more than a simple extended family.

The freedom/justice decrees did play a major role throughout much of Mesopotamian history. However, what I was emphasizing was (a) the particular "reforms" proposed, which are quite different in content from the later decrees and "law" codes, indicating the peculiar institutional forms of social chaos, and (b) that indebtedness was already a major problem by the middle of the 3d millennium, indicating the commodification of at least some important aspects of Mesopotamian life.

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## Calendar

1986

- December 3–7*. American Anthropological Association, 85th Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, Pa., U.S.A. Write: AAA, 1703 New Hampshire Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009, U.S.A.
- December*. International Economic Association, 8th World Congress, New Delhi, India. Theme: The Balance between Industry and Agriculture in Economic Development. Write: IFA, 3, rue Campagne Première, 75014 Paris, France.

1987

- March 5–8*. Society of Ethnobiology, 10th Annual Conference, Gainesville, Fla., U.S.A. Topics: cultural ecology, plant and animal domestication, ethnozoology, zooarcheology, ethnobotany, archeobotany, palynology, ethnopharmacology, human diet and nutrition, folk taxonomy. Write: Elizabeth S. Wing, Florida State Museum, Gainesville, Fla. 32611, U.S.A.

- April 5–8*. Society for Applied Anthropology, Oaxaca, Mexico. Theme: Applied Anthropology as an International Resource. Write: Demetri B. Shimkin, Department of Anthropology, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, Ill. 61801, U.S.A.

- August 10–20*. 16th Pacific Science Congress, Seoul, Republic of Korea. Theme: New Dimensions of Science, Manpower, and Resources in the Pacific. Write: Tai Whan Shin, National Academy of Sciences, 1 Sejongro, Jongro Gu, Seoul 110, Korea.

- September*. International Union of Pre- and Protohistoric Sciences, Mainz, Federal Republic of Germany.

1988

- July 24–31*. 12th International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Zagreb, Yugoslavia. Write: Anita Sujoldzic, general secretary, Organizational Committee, c/o Laboratory of Anthropology, Institute for Medical Research and Occupational Health, Mose Pijade 158, P.O. Box 291, 41,000 Zagreb, Yugoslavia, or Linda A. Bennett (America coordinator), George Washington Medical Center, 613 Ross Hall, 2300 Eye St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037, U.S.A.